

## 36 Classic Propaganda Techniques

Edward Bernays, who coined the term Public Relations, defined propaganda as “a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of a public to an enterprise, idea, or group.” A broader definition describes propaganda as any mass communication intended to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behavior of a targeted audience. Propagandists have taught the general public to define propaganda as “enemy lies,” and they assure their audiences that they are too smart, hip and cynical to ever fall for that.

Ad hominem: Attacking persons who advocate for a proposition, rather than the proposition itself.

Appeal to authority: Proving a proposition by attributing it to someone in a position of power.

Appeal to prejudice: Linking persons or propositions with emotionally loaded stereotypes.

Argument from ignorance: Asserting that the absence of positive disproof is itself positive proof.

Bandwagon: Proving an arbitrary proposition by asserting that a consensus of opinion supports it.

Beautiful people: Associating an arbitrary proposition with admirable or enviable people.

Begging the question: Inserting an implicit assertion into a rhetorical question.

Big Lie: A persistent, emotionally charged false narrative presented across numerous venues.

Black-and-white: Asserting that relative or partial differences are absolute and complete.

Buzzwords: Words or slogans used to signal and reinforce an arbitrary narrative.

Card stacking: Selectively presenting non-representative information supporting a proposition.

Deification: Presentation of a proposition or personality as categorically above reproach.

Demonization: Presenting a proposition or personality as categorically beyond redemption.

Dog whistle: Use of language with a loaded meaning to targeted members of an audience.

Euphemisms: Terms that deny or negate the emotional impact of a subject matter.

False cause: Asserting that an arbitrarily chosen event or action caused a subsequent result.

False dichotomy: Forcing an either/or choice between arbitrary or non-conflicting alternatives.

False flag: Impersonating adversaries to create false narratives.

Glittering generalities: Applying purely abstract words of praise and celebration to a proposition.

Good old days: Referencing unrealistic, idealized beliefs about a past that never happened.

Guilt by association: Associating one's adversary with parties an audience fears or dislikes.

Loaded language: Strategic application of laudatory or derogatory terms and rhetoric.

Name calling: Applying derogatory terms or descriptions to propositions or persons.

Obfuscation: Deliberate application of confusing or meaningless language.

Plain folks: Framing a proposition as simple common sense.

Playing the victim: Framing disagreement with a proposition as violence or cruelty.

Quote mining: Quoting sources out of context to create de facto falsified statements.

Red herring: Introducing irrelevant data or propositions to misdirect attention.

Scapegoating: Projecting blame or responsibility onto victims or 3rd parties.

Stereotyping: Identifying persons or propositions with ready-made caricatures.

Staining: Attributing offensive behavior or false/insulting statements to an adversary.

Straw man: Falsely attributing an easily defeated proposition or position to an adversary.

Testimonial: An endorsement from a source perceived as independent and trustworthy.

Third party technique: Attributing a proposition or endorsement to an independent source.

Transfer: Arbitrarily associate a person or proposition with an emotionally loaded symbol or belief.

Well poisoning: Discrediting sources and information contrary to one's agenda and narrative.

Propaganda techniques often overlap and interact in practical application, as for example testimonial, plain folks, good old days, stereotyping and guilt by association present as subdivisions within the broader category of Transfer. Euphemisms, glittering generalities and obfuscation present as varieties of loaded language.